

Nellie M. Gorbea
Secretary of State



Records Management: A Snapshot for Busy Managers

RI Department of State | State Archives & Public
Records Administration



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ABOUT US

The Rhode State Archives and Public Records Administration is part of the Division of Archives, Library, and Public Information within the Office of the Secretary of State. We are responsible for the following:

- The State Archives preserves and makes available for research Rhode Island's historical public records from 1638 – present;
- The Public Records Administration provides records management assistance and storage services to state agencies; and
- We also provide advice on records management to Local Government.



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THIS PRESENTATION

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1. Definitions
2. Why Records Management?
3. Records and You
4. Outcomes
5. Retention and Implementation
6. How We Help



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IS IT A PUBLIC RECORD?

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The crucial factor in deciding whether a document is a public record depends on its function and contents, not the physical means used to create, send, and keep the document. (Reference: R.I. Gen. Laws § 38-1-1.1).

Questions to ask yourself:

1. Do the contents concern public business?
2. Does it serve a public function?
3. Whose office is it from?



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IS IT A PUBLIC RECORD?

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Public Records can be any media and come in many forms, such as:

Correspondence [paper, email, text documents]	Spreadsheets	Plans and blueprints
Maps/GIS	Textual documents	Web content, blogs
Work Calendars	Diagrams, drawings, pictorial and graphic works	Photographs and film
Sound recordings	Databases	Video recordings



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WHAT IS RECORDS MANAGEMENT?

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1. Management of records and information that support the short-term business and long-term interests of an organization;
2. Classification, filing, storage, retention and disposition policies (preserve or destroy); and
3. The care of records for their entire life cycle.



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WHY RECORDS MANAGEMENT?

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We manage Public Records because they:

- Provide **documentary evidence** of all agency business activities;
- Enhance **government transparency**, responsiveness, and public trust;
- Ensure **continuity of government** operations, **recovery from disasters**;
- **Protect** state and citizen rights and interest;
- Promote better grounded agency **decision making**; and
- Preserve **institutional memory**.



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WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

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Agencies bear responsibility for the establishment of records management programs and for the proper management of their records.

(Reference R.I. Gen. Laws § § 38-3-7 and 42-8.1-17).

This means that as an agency you are responsible for:

1. Creating records that are complete enough to document all legally mandated activities; and
2. Maintaining records of policies, decisions, and transactions.



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WHAT IS YOUR TEAM'S ROLE?

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You need to ensure that your team is knowledgeable about how to ...

- **Identify** public records in all media for appropriate care;
- **Organize/classify** and file records in a consistent way across the agency so that you and your staff can retrieve them quickly when you, fellow workers, other agencies, or the public needs to consult them; and
- **Maintain** records in good order and condition so that they remain usable for as long as they need to be retained.



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OUTCOMES OF POOR RECORDS MANAGEMENT

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1. An inability to properly perform the core mission;
2. An inability to resume operations after a disaster;
3. Legal penalties for failure to find and produce records;
4. Public distrust due to inability to produce controversial or requested records; and
5. Costs for remediation of damaged records that have not yet met retention.



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RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULE

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Department of Business Regulation
Fire Safety Code Board of Appeal and Review
Records Retention Schedule
Approved September 2013, Amended June 2018

Record Series Number → **FB1**

Record Series Name → **Variance Decisions**

Record Series Description → The Fire Safety Code Board of Appeal and Review (hereinafter Fire Board) has the responsibility for deciding whether or not appeals for variances from certain aspects of the State Fire Safety Code are granted or not as per RIGL §23-28-3-5. Upon the adoption of the Fire Safety Code, there was the realization that certain situations would arise that would render strict compliance impossible. The aforementioned law establishes a procedure for building owners and/or operators to request relief from specific clauses of the Fire Safety Code. The Board then considers whether or not to grant these variances, which may take various forms. A variance of time may be granted to give an owner/operator time to comply with some aspect of the Fire Code that a structure is not yet equipped for. A variance may also be granted for structural hardship if strict compliance is impossible because of the existing structure of the facility. A variance may also allow for an alternative method of compliance with the intent of the code if the usual method is not feasible for a particular structure. The Board has the authority to render decisions on appeals for variances and holds hearings to determine whether or not to grant them. The records in this series include the decisions issued by the Board. The Fire Safety Code Board of Appeal and Review provides a copy of each decision rendered to the State Fire Marshal.

Retention Period (How long it must be kept) → Retention: Retain ten (10) years after the conclusion of the code cycle under which the variance was granted or denied.

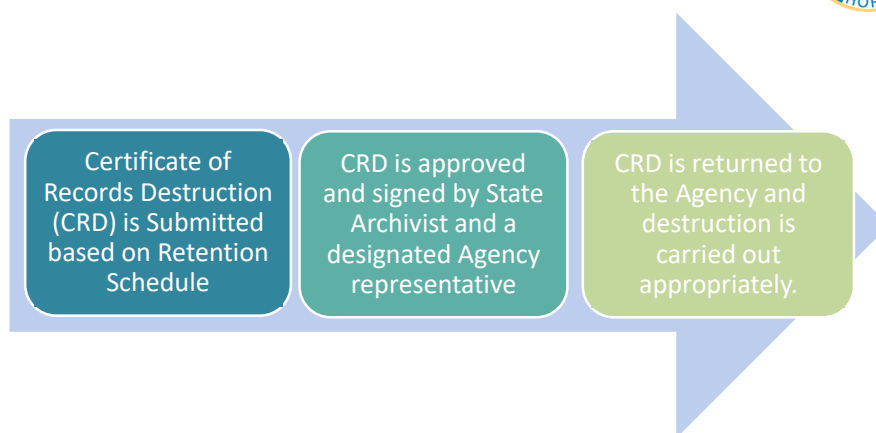
Note: Per § 23-28-3-5 (b), A properly indexed record of all variances made shall be kept in the office of the state fire marshal and shall be open to public inspection. (The State Fire Marshal retains the record permanently.)

FB2 Variance Application Files
Building owners and/or operators provide the Fire Board with applications when seeking variances in the Fire Safety Code as per RIGL §23-28-1-6. The applications contain background information on the structure involved and other documents. Additional documents in support of the application may be provided during the hearing. The files may include, but are not limited to, application forms filled out by building owners and/or operators, copies of the most recent plan reports or inspection report for the subject building (prepared by the State or Local Fire Marshal's office), related correspondence, and plans.

a) Granted or denied variances
Retention: Retain three (3) years after the mailing date of the Administrative Decision.

RECORDS DESTRUCTION

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IMPLEMENTATION – ORGANIZING YOUR FILES

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1. Do:

- Folder records, label folders and boxes using your [Records Retention Schedule](#); and
- Use standard sized records boxes. (1.2 cu. ft. can store letter/legal files)

2. Do not:

- Store loose, unidentified files;
- Just keep everything; or
- Use large bankers boxes or odd boxes.

3. Rules of thumb:

- Can you lift it?
- Pack like with like.



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IMPLEMENTATION – STORAGE STRATEGIES

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1. Non-Permanent Records

- On your premises – for as long as they are being actively used, and are organized and maintained, and secure.
- State Records Center - for state agencies - records that are infrequently or no longer consulted.

2. Permanent Records

- Permanent state agency records are **eligible** for transfer to the State Archives.
- Local Governments are responsible for storing and preserving their permanent records.



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HOW WE HELP

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1. Your Records Retention Schedule

1. Assist your Agency in the creation of a schedule; and
2. Provide guidance on using the schedule for best records management.

2. Off-site Records Storage and guidance on on-site storage best practice

3. On-site agency specific workshops and assistance

4. Records Management Policy Review and Guidance



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IN REVIEW

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1. You create, send, receive, and store work-related information...You are a records manager.

2. You are responsible for:

- a. Records Management Accountability;
- b. Public Records maintenance in any format;
- c. Records Retention Schedules;
- d. Timely Disposal of non-permanent Public Records; and
- e. Records Preservation procedures for long-term and permanent records and information.



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Questions?

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STATE ARCHIVES

statearchives@sos.ri.gov

STATE RECORDS CENTER

records@sos.ri.gov

Phone: 401-222-2353

Fax: 401-222-3199

33 Broad St. Providence, RI



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